



Montgomery County Council

From the office of Councilmember George Leventhal

News Advisory

July 25, 2005

LEVENTHAL, FOOD EXPERTS TAKE AIM AT FOOD MARKETING PRACTICES AIMED AT KIDS

News Conference to Follow Council Morning Action

Council Vice President George Leventhal, who also chairs the Health & Human Services Committee, will be joined by food marketing activists to discuss Council action on a resolution that would highlight unhealthy food marketing practices aimed at County children and publicly recognize those companies that promote more healthful foods.

The resolution grew out of a series of community fora on childhood obesity held last year by Councilmember Leventhal. Joining the Councilmember will be:

- Tracy Fox, County parent and PTA leader
- Claudia Malloy, a leader with Center for Science in the Public Interest
- Representative from the American Academy of Pediatrics

When: Tuesday, July 26, 2005 1 PM

Where: Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville, 3rd Floor Conference Room.

Contact: Patty Rapp 240-777-7972 # # #

AGENDA ITEM #3F
July 26, 2005

Resolution No: _____
Introduced: July 18, 2005
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL
FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

By: Councilmember Leventhal

SUBJECT: A Resolution by the Montgomery County Council urging Companies to Examine Their Food Marketing Practices Aimed at Children

Background

1. Obesity rates have tripled in children and adolescents over the last 30 years. Children's diets are putting them at future risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other serious, disabling, and costly diseases. Many children in Montgomery County and across the nation suffer from high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, and type 2 diabetes, even while still in childhood.
2. Even most children at a healthy weight eat diets that are too high in calories, saturated and trans fat, refined sugars, and salt, and too low in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fiber, and calcium.
3. Companies spend billions of dollars on advertising which has proven effective in influencing the food choices of children. Such advertising encourages children to eat diets that are high in calories, saturated and trans fat, added sugars, and sodium, or that are largely devoid of nutrients.
4. During a series of workshops sponsored by the Chair of the County Council's Health and Human Services Committee in 2004, many county parents expressed concern that they are finding it increasingly difficult to feed their children a healthful diet given the abundance of aggressive marketing of low-nutrition foods to children.
5. The variety of marketing techniques used by companies includes product development and reformulation, premiums and incentives, licensing agreements, merchandise with brand information, games, sponsorship, the placement of products in retail stores, and in-school advertising.
6. *Guidelines for Responsible Food Marketing to Children*, developed by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), provides an informative model for companies to use in promoting more healthful alternatives for children.
7. The Institute of Medicine has undertaken a comprehensive study, funded by the Centers for Disease Control in response to a Congressional directive, of the effects of food marketing on the health of children and youth. The study will conclude with a report that will: describe the state of food marketing to children and youth, and its impact on their diet and health; develop a framework and indicators to guide the development of effective marketing and advertising

strategies that foster healthy food choices among children and youth; and if feasible, provide estimated costs of implementation strategies and benchmarks to guide future evaluation.

8. In September, 2004, the Institute of Medicine released its comprehensive national strategy for tackling the rise in childhood obesity, "Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance." In the report, the Institute of Medicine recommends specific actions for families, schools, industry, communities, and government. Following up on these recommendations, the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Federal Trade Commission recently held a two-day workshop to explore the effectiveness of the television industry's self-regulation efforts in marketing food products to children.
9. The Institute of Medicine further recommends that local governments, public health agencies, schools and community organizations collaboratively develop and promote programs that encourage healthful eating behaviors and regular physical activity, particularly for high-risk populations.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following Resolution:

The Montgomery County Council calls upon companies to develop and promote more healthful foods for children, to assist parents in feeding their children nutritious diets, and to stop marketing nutrition-poor food to children.

The Montgomery County Council's Health and Human Services Committee will be contacting companies that do business in Montgomery County and market to children. The committee will publicly recognize the name of the companies that respond, as well as those that do not.

The Montgomery County Council's Health and Human Services Committee will place the marketing of foods to children on its agenda in the fall of 2005. At that time the Committee will request that representatives of restaurants, supermarkets, food manufacturers and related businesses that advertise or do business in Montgomery County join the committee for a discussion of marketing practices and efforts to promote healthful foods to families.

The Montgomery County Council will publicly commend companies that operate in Montgomery County and promote healthy eating and fitness to young people.

This is a correct copy of Council action:

Linda Lauer, Clerk of the Council

Date